

# Tips for Improving Your Cholesterol Levels

Elevated levels of cholesterol in the blood can raise your risk of heart disease and stroke. Often all that's needed are a few simple lifestyle changes.

**Get more physical activity.** Do moderate-intensity exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. You can also break up your daily activity into three 10-minute segments, if you're having difficulty finding time to exercise.

**Make healthy food choices.** Eat a diet free from—or low in—saturated fat, trans fats, and dietary cholesterol. See third column for specific food choices with some suggestions for good fats.

**Lose weight.** If you're overweight, losing even a few pounds can improve your cholesterol. Losing 10 lbs. can decrease your LDL ("bad") cholesterol by up to 8 percent. If you focus on becoming more physically active and choosing healthier food—two other ways to

improve cholesterol—you'll likely move toward a healthier weight in the process.

**Drink alcohol only in moderation.** Moderate use of alcohol has been linked with higher levels of HDL (good) cholesterol. If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation. This means no more than one drink a day for women and everyone over age 65, and two drinks a day for men. If you don't drink alcohol, don't start.

**Don't smoke.** If you smoke, quit. Quitting smoking can increase your HDL (good) cholesterol by up to 10 percent. Talk with your doctor about your options for quitting. All Federal Employee Health Benefit Plans offer 100% coverage.

## Improving Cholesterol Through Healthier Food Choices

According to the CDC, a diet low in excess calories, saturated fat, trans fats, and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease.

### Soluble Fiber

- Total dietary fiber intake—25g daily, of which about 25% (about 6 g) should be soluble fiber.
- Sources: oatmeal, barley, legumes, apples, berries, citrus fruits, psyllium

### Omega 3 Fatty Acids

- Alaskan salmon, Atlantic mackerel, sardines, albacore tuna, trout, herring, ground flaxseed, chia seeds, walnuts, soybeans

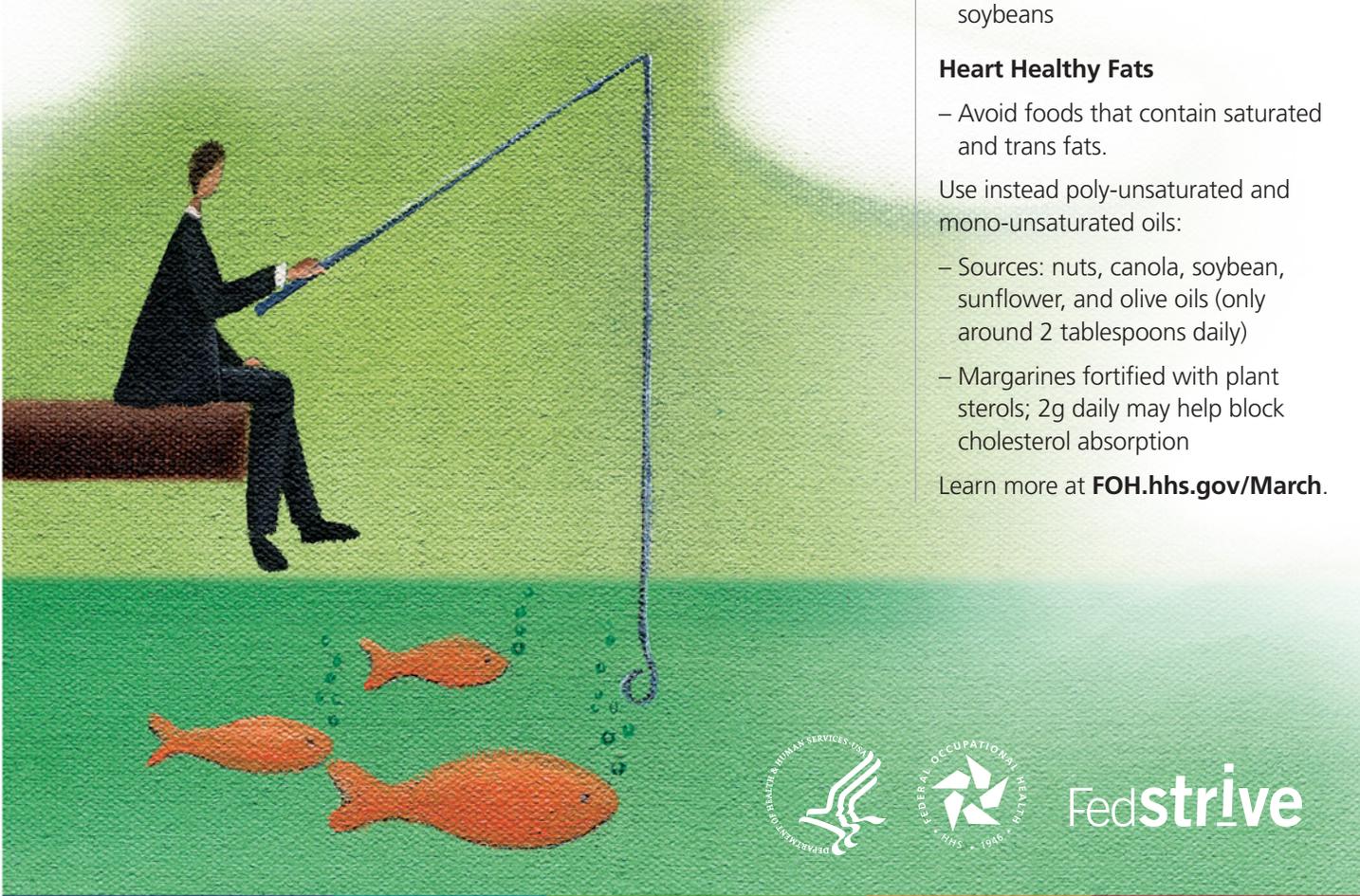
### Heart Healthy Fats

- Avoid foods that contain saturated and trans fats.

Use instead poly-unsaturated and mono-unsaturated oils:

- Sources: nuts, canola, soybean, sunflower, and olive oils (only around 2 tablespoons daily)
- Margarines fortified with plant sterols; 2g daily may help block cholesterol absorption

Learn more at [FOH.hhs.gov/March](http://FOH.hhs.gov/March).



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